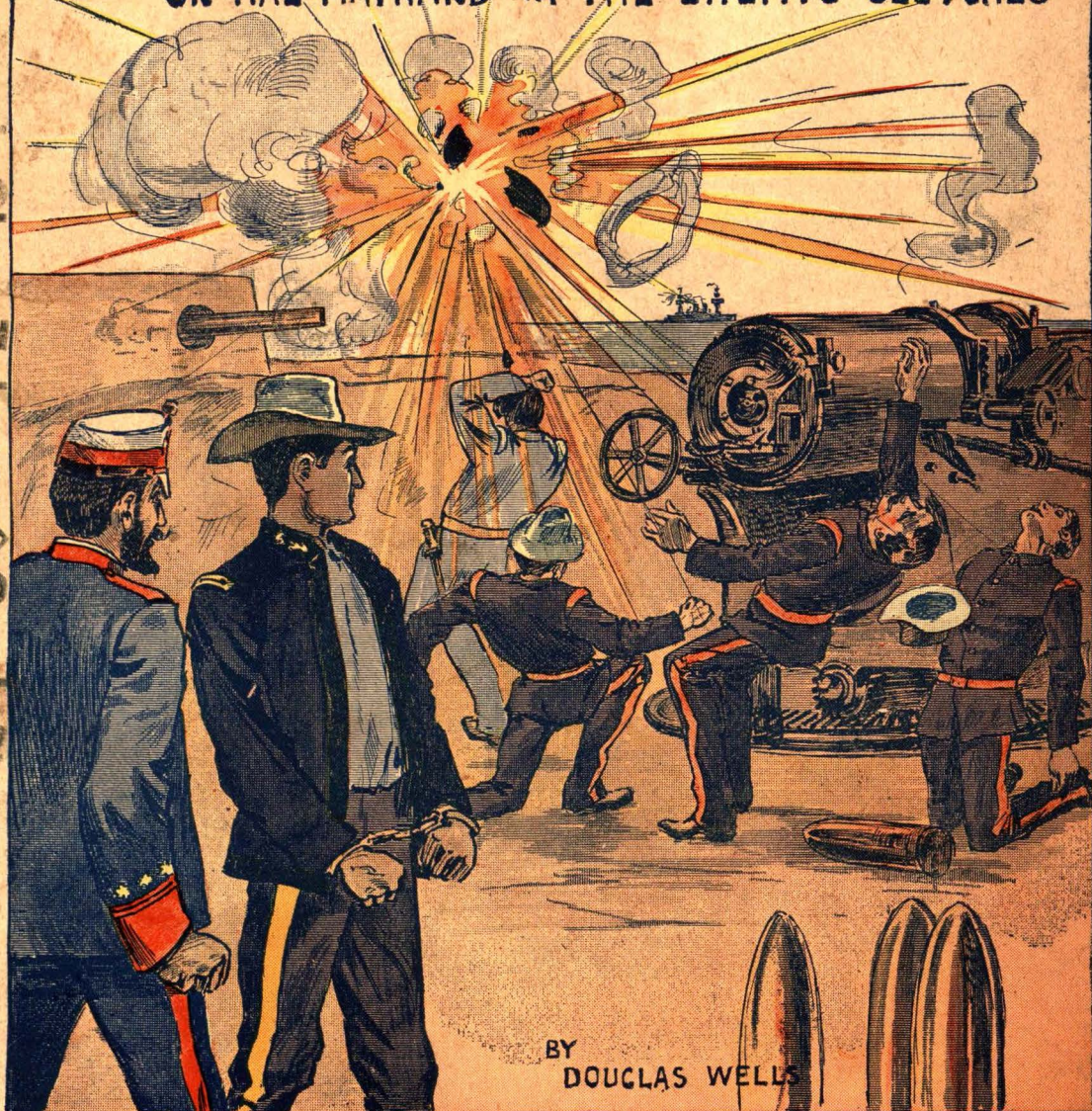


STARRY FLAG WEEKLY

THRILLING STORIES OF OUR VICTORIOUS ARMY

THE PRISONER OF MATANZAS OR HAL MAYNARD IN THE ENEMY'S CLUTCHES



BY
DOUGLAS WELLS

"NOW LET US SEE YOUR YANKEE PORKERS SHOOT!" JEERED CAPTAIN BALDANERO. HE WAS GRATIFIED.

G. Enghauge's Book, Cigar, Tobacco & Candy Store

Over 12,000 New and Old Books and Libraries in Stock.

Cor. Madison and Washington Sts. 45 S. Halsted St. CHICAGO, ILL.

C. Enghauge's Book, Cigar, Tobacco & Candy Store.
Over 12,000 New and Old Books and Libraries in Stock.
Cor. Madison and Washington Sts. 45 S. Halsted St. CHICAGO, ILL.

Starry Flag Weekly

Issued Weekly.—By Subscription, \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, STREET & SMITH, 81 Fulton St., N. Y. Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1898, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.

No. 6.

NEW YORK, June 11, 1898.

Price Five Cents.

THE PRISONER OF MATANZAS;

OR,

Hal Maynard in the Enemy's Clutches.

By DOUGLAS WELLS.

First Part.

CHAPTER I.

OFF FOR CUBA'S COAST.

"General Gomez asks you to report to him."

"Good!"

Returning to its holster the revolver which he had been critically examining, Lieutenant Hal Maynard rose to his feet with an alert springiness that characterized all his movements.

"But, mi amigo——" hesitated Captain Juan Ramirez.

"Well?"

"Have you no suspicion as to what his business is?"

A melancholy light came into Maynard's eyes.

"I presume that he is ready to hand me the reports which he wants me to take back to the United States."

"That is what I imagined, and, mi amigo, it means that we are to part at last."

"Of course," sighed Hal.

And then, a new thought coming to his mind, he added, swiftly:

"But it will also mean, my boy, perhaps, that the war is to be more swiftly

terminated. Then we can be with each other at our own pleasure."

They formed a pleasing contrast, this pair.

Hal Maynard, fair, tall and lithe, presented a handsome, soldierly sight in his uniform as a second lieutenant in the United States army.

He became the uniform, carried it with as jaunty grace as any West Pointer, although, before the opening of the war, he had never worn Uncle Sam's uniform.

It has been told in previous accounts how Hal Maynard first went to Cuba as a planter's clerk; how, having been left behind by the exodus under Consul General Lee, he got into the Cuban army; how he subsequently came to go to the United States on a mission for General Gomez; how, while at Key West, he had been ordered, upon accepting a commission in the army, to proceed with twenty troopers to Cuba, there to find Gomez and to deliver certain papers from the Washington government.

These papers were queries as to the military and other supplies needed by the Cuban generalissimo. During the days that were consumed in preparing the reply to the United States, Hal and his

troopers had met with a series of rousing adventures which have been already chronicled.

Juan Ramirez, his chum and comrade, had attained captain's rank in the Cuban army, where frequent deaths and the chance for dashing deeds made promotion much more rapid than in Uncle Sam's line.

Ramirez wore a uniform of brown duck, with leggings a shade darker, and a wide-brimmed sombrero.

At his waist was a belt half filled with cartridges. Near his right hand rested the butt of his revolver, in holster, a long leathern thong running from a ring in the pistol's butt to another ring on his belt.

At the left side hung a machete in scabbard; from the hilt of the weapon hung a leathern noose, which, when the blade was drawn, was fastened around the wrist.

Weapons were so scarce among the Cubans that they took no chance of losing them from their grasp in the mad scramble of battle.

In many respects Juan was a direct contrast to his American friend; he was short, dark and swarthy.

In courage they were twins; yet even in this respect there was a difference, for while Hal Maynard was ever cool and calculating in danger, Ramirez was reckless to the point of foolhardiness.

The bare sight of Spanish uniforms was enough to inflame the Cuban. Regardless of the numbers of the enemy, he panted to ride at them, heedless of advantage or danger.

From the time of their first acquaintance in Havana, the two had seldom been separated, fate having apparently decreed that their valorous deeds should be performed together.

But with Hal's return to the United States the separation which both dreaded must come.

Henceforth Juan would be with the Cuban army, our hero with Uncle Sam's forces.

Whether they should meet during the campaign of the allies in the island would depend upon where the commands of each should serve.

General Gomez's summons to our hero on this morning both regarded as the prelude to their separation.

Therefore, while Hal walked briskly in the direction of the generalissimo's tent, though his eyes flashed at the idea of now going back to his own country on an important mission, his heart was heavy with thinking of Juan.

General Gomez's first question after greetings was direct:

"Lieutenant Maynard, how soon can you start on your return to Key West?"

"In ten minutes from the time that you are through with me, general."

"My report to your government is ready," answered Gomez. "While hospitality should make me loath to send you away, both the United States and Cuba would be served by your prompt departure."

"And I shall be ready, general, within ten minutes from the time I give the word to my sergeant."

"Now, lieutenant," resumed Gomez, "while a large escort might be embarrassing to you rather than a source of safety, I cannot see you start for the coast with what I should deem an insufficient escort. If you were to encounter any force of the enemy, your own men might not prove ample protection for you. Therefore I have decided to send with you a troop of cavalry."

"I thank you, general; and, since you deem it necessary to send your men with me I shall be glad of their added protection."

"The troop that I shall send," pursued Gomez, "will be under the command of one of my ablest young officers. I am

sure that you will be satisfied when I tell you that he will be Captain Juan Ramirez."

"Ramirez?" repeated Hal. "Surely, general, you must have studied to give me the most pleasant surprise in your power."

"I know how you two are attached to each other. After the splendid achievements which you have performed in company, I do not wonder at the admiration which each feels for the other."

"With your permission, general, I will go in search of Captain Ramirez, for I have reason to believe that he does not yet know that he has been selected."

"He will soon know it," answered Gomez, "for, just before you entered, I sent an orderly in search of him."

At that moment, Ramirez entered the tent, saluting respectfully.

In a few words Gomez told the young captain the duty assigned to him.

Juan's face shone with delight.

"I could have had no duty more pleasing, general. I can have my troop ready in five minutes."

In his transport of joy, Ramirez turned and grasped our hero's hand.

"Go and give your orders, gentlemen. Then return to me."

In two minutes Hal and Juan re-entered the tent together.

"It is always well to be prepared against all possibilities," declared the generalissimo. "Since there is no knowing what mishaps may occur on the way, I have had two copies made of my report to the Washington government. You, Lieutenant Maynard, will carry one set of papers, and you, Captain Ramirez, the other. If mishap comes, but one of you succeeds in getting through, then my report will reach Washington safely."

"With your permission, general," urged Juan, "I will go and get my dispatch box."

"You will not need it, captain, for

these papers. Do you see the size of your package?"

And General Gomez held up two square packages, each about three inches on a side, and only the barest fraction of an inch in thickness.

"There are many pages to the report," continued Gomez, "but the leaves are written on paper almost as fine as spider's webs. You will see that, including the silk, neither package weighs more than an ounce. Take them, gentlemen, and stow them where you will. Be assured that water will not affect the papers, since the oiled silk is so carefully wrapped about the papers as to protect them in any circumstances. And now, gentlemen, in the cause of both the United States and Cuba, may God speed you!"

Silently the general wrung the hand of each, adding, after a moment:

"Lieutenant Maynard, to whatever superior officer you report, be kind enough to convey my compliments and sincerest good wishes. Tell him, as the representative of the United States, that Gomez's prayers and support shall at all times be given to any American who needs them."

With a wave of his hand the general dismissed them.

As for Juan, once they were clear of headquarters, he halted and threw his arms about Hal in an impulsive Cuban embrace.

"Still together, mi amigo. Who knows but we shall go through the war in that fashion?"

"I hope so," responded Maynard, heartily. "With you by my side, Juan, I could never grow faint-hearted."

Over at Hal's camp his troopers stood leaning by their horses, while Sergeant Jim Brown, the veteran non-commissioned officer in charge of the squad, was already in saddle.

At Hal's command the troopers leaped to saddle.

Forming in fours, they awaited the word to march.

Our hero delayed only until he saw Captain Ramirez's troop come into sight.

America's grand old Stars and Stripes waved at the head of the column.

At the head of the Cuban riders floated the Lone Star flag of the little island republic.

At a slow march the line went by the headquarters tent

General Maximo Gomez came out, bared his aged head to both flags.

Uncle Sam's troopers rode by at "present sabre." Juan's men saluted with their drawn machetes.

"Viva los Americanos!"

"Viva los Estados Unidos!"

Gomez's camp rang with the shouts with which his soldiers and officers wished the little American expedition Godspeed.

No sooner were they past the lines of the camp than Juan detailed twenty of his most alert men to ride at front and rear to scour the country as scouts.

For five miles ahead and five miles to the rear, with a half a mile on either flank, their route was to be protected against surprise.

"Whatever Spaniards are in our way," he explained to Hal, "we shall have swift and sure warning of their presence. And now, mi amigo, why not tell your men to ride or walk at ease? My fellows will look out for all danger. We shall have a safe and lazy journey."

Crack! rang a rifle.

Whizz-zz! sped a bullet, sniping a button from Maynard's coat.

CHAPTER II.

THE TICK TICK MACHINE.

All the color fled from Juan's face.

"First four—left wheel—trot—gallop!"

Off in a second went Sergeant Jim Brown and four of his men, riding straight toward the clump of bushes in front of which a tiny cloud of smoke still lingered.

After them raced a squad of Cubans.

All who saw the affair supposed that Uncle Sam's lieutenant had been wounded.

"Hurt, mi amigo?" gasped Juan.

"Nothing that a needle and thread won't remedy," laughed Hal.

"My boasting was punished," muttered the Cuban.

Suddenly Hal clapped spurs to his horse, racing off ahead.

While Sergeant Jim, the American troopers and the Cubans were beating about in the bushes, our hero caught sight of a crouching, running figure at some distance.

Sergeant Jim did not see the fugitive, his view being prevented by intervening bushes, but that acute old Indian trailer had already discovered the faint tracks of the assassin in the hard soil.

"Follow me, boys!" roared the sergeant.

At a swift trot they set off, coming upon the scene just in time to see the finish.

Hal, riding down upon the fugitive, aimed his revolver at the fellow's head.

"Halt! surrender!" commanded the young lieutenant, sternly.

For answer the fellow tried to raise his rifle for another shot.

Crack! Hal's bullet, sent in the nick of time, crashed through the scoundrel's wrist, shattering it.

With a cry of pain he dropped his rifle, just as Hal, reining up short, sprang from saddle and grabbed at the wounded man's collar.

"A candidate for hanging!" growled Sergeant Jim. "Look out!"

This latter ejaculation was wrung from the non-com. by a sudden move on the

part of the captive, who, with a sudden movement of his left hand drew a knife which he thrust at his captor's abdomen.

Springing from saddle, the sergeant launched himself forward.

But Hal's disengaged arm flew out, fending off the blow.

Shake! Muscular Hal gave the foe a wrench that made his teeth rattle.

"Let me have him," muttered Sergeant Brown, wrapping his brawny hands about the fellow's throat.

Strangle! choke! The fellow who had twice attempted our hero's life was now in fearful danger of losing his own.

His eyes bulged out, his tongue protruded, his face began to turn black.

"Don't kill him," commanded Hal.

"As you say, sir," responded the sergeant, but there was a half snort of disgust in his voice as he relinquished the prisoner to troopers who seized the stranger by either hand.

Relieved of that gripping pressure around his throat, the would-be assassin inhaled several deep breaths.

"What did this attempt mean?" interrogated Hal, sternly. "Why should you seek my life?"

The prisoner did not reply, but glared sullenly at his interlocutor.

"Why did you try to kill me?" insisted Hal.

"I have no answer to make," was the reply, in Spanish.

"You do not deny that it was you who fired, as well as you who tried to stab me?"

"Since when was it forbidden to kill Yankee pigs?" demanded the captive, in an ugly tone.

"You have said enough," interposed Juan, who had been standing near by.

"You have said quite enough, scoundrel, to hang yourself, for none but a Spaniard would talk in that fashion. Well, are you ready to die?"

"Yes," came the defiant answer.

"It is well," said Juan, grimly. "You shall not be disappointed."

At a sign from Ramirez, one of the Cuban horsemen came near with a rope.

"My friend," urged Hal, laying a hand on his friend's arm, "do not take the matter into your own hands."

"But Cuban commanders are authorized to hang scoundrels in such cases," declared Captain Ramirez.

"Nevertheless, let us not mar our journey by such sights. Surely it will be enough to send the villain back to General Gomez."

"If you wish, mi amigo——"

"Decidedly. Besides, since he is undoubtedly a spy who has been hanging about the camp, perhaps General Gomez can force him to reveal some facts that will be of value."

"You are wise, mi amigo," assented Juan. "Very well, then; back to the generalissimo this dog goes. But he shall go with the halter about his neck."

Over the prisoner's neck the noose was slipped, and made fast enough to be secure.

At the other end of the noose was the hand of a Cuban horseman.

"My captain, may I speak?" requested one of Juan's troopers, riding up.

"Speak."

"This dog has hung about the camp for weeks. He refused to handle a gun, but was permitted to cook for some of the men. Major Alvaredo can tell more about the fellow's doings in camp."

"Then do you go back also with this prisoner," directed Captain Ramirez. "Report to General Gomez what you have told me just now, and also what you have seen."

That matter disposed of, the column started again.

Thereafter, the day was without particular incident.

When it was almost dark, the command halted in a ravine that offered ex-

cellent facilities for camping, in the way of water and forage.

Supper was eaten, sentries and videttes posted, and the rest disposed themselves for a night's rest.

Hal was just wrapping himself in his blanket when Sergeant Brown approached.

"Awake, lieutenant?" queried the sergeant.

"Yes," answered Hal, sitting up and acknowledging the sergeant's salute.

"Will you come with me, lieutenant? There's something I'd like to call your attention to."

"Certainly," and Hal rose.

"Anything strange, sergeant?" asked Juan, also rising.

"Rather, sir."

"Then I'd better go with you, too."

"I don't know as it amounts to anything, lieutenant," went on the sergeant, "but one of the sentries called my attention to it, and I thought I'd better call you."

"But you haven't told me what it is yet, sergeant."

"For the very good reason, sir, that I don't know myself. One of the sentries heard a slight noise that puzzled him. He couldn't find the source, and no more could I. But here we are, sir."

They had halted close against a bank.

"You'll have to stand very quietly, sir," suggested the sergeant.

"I hear it," muttered Hal. "A curious sound, too."

Then, as he listened again, the sound became more distinct.

Tick-tick! tick-tick! tick-tick!

It came, apparently, from behind some bushes that grew close against the steep hillside.

"It can't be large, whatever it is," decided Hal, "that can stand in the small space behind these bushes."

He took hold of the bushes to bend them apart.

Slipping on a pebble, Hal gripped harder at one of the bushes to recover his balance.

He recovered, but the bush came up in his hands, showing at the bottom a sharp whittled end instead of roots.

"Thunder!" muttered the young lieutenant. "What can this mean?"

Dropping the pulled-up bush, he seized at the next one.

This likewise came up out of the ground, showing also a whittled end.

Two more bushes yielded as easily.

But greatest surprise of all was the sight that the absence of the bushes revealed.

Before the astonished trio was a two foot opening into the hillside.

"Strike a light," directed the young lieutenant.

Sergeant Jim flared a match. He held it low, as Hal, flopping to his knees, peered into the hole.

"Here's the tick-tick," he muttered groping into the hole.

Out came his hands, gripping a box some foot and a half long and a foot square at the ends.

Tick-tick! tick-tick! tick-tick!

"Want any advice, sir?" questioned Sergeant Jim.

"Well?"

"Handle that box carefully, sir."

"You bet I will," came Hal's emphatic answer.

"What can be wrong with it?" questioned Juan.

"Don't know that anything is," rejoined Hal, despositing the box on the ground and regarding it with an air of calculation. "But I have an idea on the subject."

"I do not understand you, mi amigo."

"You hear the clockwork?"

"Certainly."

"Clockwork is sometimes used to explode an infernal machine at a desired time."

"Diablo!" muttered Ramirez, stepping back a foot or two.

But the next instant he came forward again.

"Have a care, mi amigo," he warned.

"I should be happy," smiled Hal, "if I knew one thing."

"And what is that, mi amigo?"

"At what hour this thing is set to go."

"We had better move camp without delay," urged Juan. "Once we get out safely away, the thing can explode any hour that suits it."

Sergeant Jim, who had stood in the background, silently regarding the young officers and their find, nodded his approval.

"Sergeant," asked Hal, turning around, "how could any prowler have got into the camp to plant such a contrivance without being seen by the sentries?"

"No one could, sir," rejoined the sergeant.

"Then how came this box to be here?"

"It was placed here, sir, before we had posted the guard."

"But how could any one have known in advance that we were to camp here? That's clearly impossible."

"I don't know, sir."

"I'm going to investigate this affair," said Hal, beginning to pry at the lid of the box.

"Don't do anything of the sort, mi amigo," begged Juan.

"Nonsense! I'm not going to run from a danger until I know what it is."

A good many of the soldiers had been attracted to the spot by this time.

Swiftly word passed from mouth to mouth.

Some of the soldiers came nearer; others retreated to a considerable distance.

"Your knife, Juan," asked Hal. "I think I can easily pry this box open."

"But if it should explode, mi amigo——"

Nevertheless, taking the knife, our hero started to open the box.

Of a sudden the tick-tick changed to a shrill noise that caused Lieutenant Maynard to drop the box, spring up and dart backward.

Trill-ll-ll-ll-ll!

Hal's startled look changed to one of bewilderment. Next he laughed outright.

Out of the hole in the bank protruded a human head.

"Gentlemen," proposed the owner of the head, in a drawling voice, "I don't object to your inspecting my goods, but I'd a heap rather show 'em myself."

Had the box exploded, it could not have produced much more consternation than this sudden interruption from an unexpected stranger.

Before the young officers could recover from their surprise, this stranger began to wriggle some six-foot-three of lanky length out of the hole in the hillside.

—

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN WHO ATE NOTCHES.

"Fine evening, you bet," drawled this stranger, as he drew himself to his feet and began to brush the soil from his clothes.

Then, gazing at Hal and Juan, who were intently looking at him, the stranger added:

"Anything in my line this evening?"

"What is your line?" questioned Hal.

"Got the finest sample line of alarm clocks in that box that ever came out of Ansonia, Connecticut, or I'm a second Annanias."

"Alarm clocks?" voiced Juan, while Hal began to laugh again.

"Yes, siree. Judkins P. Watkins is my name, though folks generally call me plain Jud. But about them clocks——"

"We've had quite enough of the clocks," smiled Hal. "We took the box for an infernal machine, set to clock-work."

"Say, did you, now?" drawled Mr. Watkins, beginning to grin. "That's what the row was about, eh? The row you were making—beg pardon, gentlemen—woke me up, but I was too late to catch the drift of the excitement. But you needn't be afraid. The worst thing them clocks will do is to make such a rumpus that a fellow can't get his last sleep in the morning."

"Step over to the fire and have some coffee?" invited Hal.

"Will I?" exclaimed Mr. Watkins, with alacrity. "Just watch me. Say the best thing I've tasted since I left Haavna was notches."

"Notches?" repeated Hal.

"Notches you bet," replied Mr. Watkins, watching with interest the efforts of Sergeant Jim to pour a cup of coffee and cut off three or four slices of bread. "Ever eat any notches?"

"Can't say that I have," replied puzzled Hal.

"See here," and Mr. Watkins, unbuttoning his vest with a rapid movement, displayed the leather belt that performed the duty of keeping his trousers up. "When I bought this here belt it had four notches. I fastened it in the second notch when I left Ansonia. By the time I'd been in Havana three days food was so high-priced that I had the tongue of the buckle in the fourth notch. By the time the week was out I had punched two extra notches in the leather. Then Lee went off, and things got all-fired hot for Yankees in Havana. Besides that, people warn't buying alarm clocks any longer. Their empty stomachs woke 'em up in the morning, and my line of trade was ruined. You bet!

"Well, I managed to get out of Havana, and I made up my mind that

I'd strike out for Cubitas, where the rebel government lives. Thought maybe the folks there'd buy clocks, so's to know when it was time to chase the dirty Spaniards out of the island. Well, I've been a-tramping a good many days now. Say, but times are hard in this island, you bet! I've had some money in my clothes to buy food, but I couldn't find anybody who had any to sell. See this?"

And Mr. Watkins, taking off his belt, passed it over to Hal.

"Maybe, if your eyesight's good," went on the Ansonia man, "you'll notice that besides the four original holes there's eight more in the belt now, and I wear her buckled up to the last hole. Oh, Lord!"

Which remark was evoked from Mr. Watkins by the sight of a stack of bread and a cup of steaming hot coffee that Sergeant Brown now offered him.

"Excuse me while I chew," went on the Yankee.

He took a huge bite out of the bread, washed it down with a big swallow of the coffee, and repeated this dual operation until the last of the bread and the coffee had disappeared.

"Have some more, pardner?" asked Sergeant Jim, hospitably.

"No, thankee, had lots. That is, well, I'm ashamed, gentlemen, to let you see just how hungry I am."

"Nonsense," broke in Hal. "Sergeant, don't let Mr. Watkins get away until he takes oath that he's had all he can hold."

While the Yankee drummer was eating his second batch of food, Hal and Juan found good opportunity to study him.

Jud Watkins, so far as appearances went, might have been anywhere from twenty-five to thirty-five. In his plumpest condition he was doubtless a lean mean. His face was thin and cadaverous, though his high forehead and bright eyes betokened intelligence and spirit. His

unfailing good humor was evident at a glance.

That he was a hustler his quick, alert, unfailing action betokened. His way of looking about him made it plain that he was accustomed to taking in all that occurred in his neighborhood.

"Thanks," murmured Mr. Watkins, when he had finished. "I guess that belt of mine will have to be let out a couple of notches now. That's more fodder than I've had since I left Ansonia. Now, if my guess is good, young man, you belong to United States forces."

"Yes," admitted Hal.

"I heard something about war being declared, but I didn't just know whether it was a Spanish lie or not. Since you're here, it proves that war has started. Young man, I'm right glad to know that the Yankee troops are here. If I can find some one to sell my sample line to, I'll enlist. Any other Ansonia boys in the army?"

"Not that I know of," replied Hall. "I presume there are, though, by this time. But this squad, so far as I know, is all the American force on the island so far."

"And you're the boss? I mean the officer?"

"Second Lieutenant Maynard, with a cavalry detachment."

"Ain't lookin' for recruits, be you?" asked Mr. Watkins, eagerly.

"I presume recruits are wanted in the United States," rejoined Hal.

"That's a long ways back," pursued Mr. Watkins, meditatively, "and I guess the walking's kind of muddy."

"How did you come to be in that hole?" inquired Hal.

"The hole was there before I was," replied Mr. Watkins, with a twinkle in his eyes. "I found it long about an hour before sundown. Struck me as a good place to hide, as I've been getting distant views of Spaniards for the last four or five

days. So, when I struck that there cave, I saw how the mouth could be covered up. Cut the bushes, crawled into the hole, all but my head and shoulders, and planted the bushes just as you found them. Pretty soon after that I went to sleep. Didn't know nothing more until your talking and one of my own alarm clocks woke me up. Best clock in the world to wake a man up, you bet!"

"And you have travelled all the way from Havana?" queried Juan.

"That's what I've done, friend."

"And managed to keep out of the hands of the Spaniards?"

"Well, I fell into their hands day before yesterday, and I guess maybe those chaps haven't forgot the meeting yet," responded Mr. Watkins, his retrospective look broadening into a grin.

"You see, there weren't more'n about twenty of 'em, but when a fellow is armed with nothing but alarm clocks he don't fell he's got any extra show against twenty fellows that have got guns and act as if they were anxious to use them. First of all they went through me, and," added the narrator, gloomily, "I haven't got so much money in my clothes now."

"Did I get mad? If I did, you bet I didn't show it. I just began to laugh. Then I laughed some more. And then some more. Next, a good deal more. The Spaniards grinned at first, but when I kept on laughing they looked as if they thought I was crazy. You see, friends, I've travelled a bit through Spain with samples, in my day, and I hain't forgotten all I knew of their lingo, I guess. So pretty soon, a voice came out of the top of a palm that said, 'You Spanish dogs, release that poor lunatic, or give up hope of Heaven!'"

Hal could not repress a start. A muttered "Diablo" came from Juan. Sergeant Jim began to peer up through the darkness at the top of the palm under which they were sitting.

"That was just the way I did it," resumed Mr. Watkins, with a grin. "You see, friends, I used to travel with an Indian medicine show. I started in as driver on the wagon, but before long I picked up a bit of the knack of ventriloquism. It's a good thing, for it scared those Spaniards, you bet! They began to stare up into the tree, exactly as our friend here with the 'Vs' on his arm did just now.

"Then some of the most unearthly groans began to come from the woods around. It was part of my old ghost act that I did once with a feller that sold joint lubricator. After that, the top of the palm tree got in its work again, giving those Spaniards some fatherly advice, sandwiched in with some remarks about their future residence in a hot place that needs only to be hinted at.

"Was them Spaniards scared? I don't guess! Then I did a fit of laughing—kind of demon sort that I did once with a hard-up 'Black Crook' show. I threw a fit, and rolled over on the ground some, I guess. When I looked up, there wasn't a Spaniard in sight. If they'd only stayed long enough," sighed Mr. Watkins, "I'd have won my money back and p'raps a bit more to boot, on cash orders for clocks that wouldn't never have been delivered."

"Do you really mean to say," questioned Hal, looking at the drummer, "that you're trying to sell clocks on this island?"

"Trying?" repeated Mr. Watkins. "Why, friend, I got wholesale orders for more'n six hundred clocks in Havana before I was forced to leave. I guess the war has knocked the bottom out of them orders."

"Well, of all the queer places to drum up trade," exclaimed Hal, "Cuba is certainly the strangest. I wonder if there's fifty dollars left among all the Cubans on the island!"

"These orders," explained Mr. Wat-

kins, picking up his box and patting affectionately, "are sold on ninety days time. By that time I guess Cuban bond will be up high enough to be accepted in payment. But speaking of queer places my uncle, who travels for the same house, was in St. Petersburg at the time that the czar, Alexander the Two, was blown up by them nihilists. Trade was mighty poor, but uncle got even by coming out of that country with eight tons of pieces of the bomb that was used to blow his imperial nibs up with."

"Eight tons?" repeated Juan, dubiously.

"I forget whether it was eight or nine," replied Watkins, hesitatingly. "Anyway, the duty on scrap iron was mighty low. Maybe, if I don't sell clocks, I'll pick up a bit of some good kind of business."

CHAPTER IV.

DEATH AT DUTY'S CALL.

"Jehwillikins! This is what I call going in style."

Thus declared Mr. Jud Watkins, of Ansonia, the next morning when he found both himself and his sample case astride one of the Cuban horses.

Beside him sat a Cuban trooper in saddle, while near by lounged a dismounted Cuban soldier, he, in fact, whose horse the Yankee drummer rode.

"It is General Gomez's orders," replied Juan, simply.

"Do you mean to say that the old chap ordered you to furnish travelling outfits to all the Yankee salesmen you met?"

"Not exactly that; but he has ordered all his officers to be on the lookout for Americans on the island who need protection or aid, and for us to furnish it. Your next meeting with Spanish troops might not end as fortunately as your last one. Now that you have an escort, three men can expect to get through the Spanish

lines with ease. Success to you, Americano."

Mr. Watkins at once set out in the highest spirits, but whether he sold any clocks, or whether he got his pay for them if he did, it was many a day before Hal was destined to learn.

As for our young friends, four days more brought them to the sea-coast, near the port of Mantazas.

It was late in the afternoon when they halted under the trees on a wooded hill overlooking the ocean to the northward.

Below them, on all sides, Cuban scouts had been thrown out. There was no danger of surprise; little danger, even, of attack.

As for the American troopers, they had done nothing on the trip but ride. Sergeant Jim and his squad had therefore enjoyed themselves to the full.

Five miles off to the west lay the dingy, mud-colored city of Matanzas. Hardly two miles from the crest of the hill the waters of the Atlantic lapped the beach of a little bay.

Away out at sea, up to the northward, were three or four small objects moving on the horizon.

These were American war-ships, members of Admiral Samson's blockading fleet.

Once aboard any one of these craft, Lieutenant Maynard could feel that his important mission in Cuba was as good as accomplished, for after that it rested with the navy to safely convey him to Key West, where the important dispatches for Washington, from General Gomez, would be handed over to the military commandant.

"You will signal?" asked Juan.

"Not before night, my boy; and not then until I see a first signal from the water."

"And has that signal been shown every night since you have been in Cuba?"

"It was to be shown, first, on the fifth night after I landed. Ever since then it has been shown, if the agreement has been kept."

Juan shook his head dubiously.

"Without a doubt, then," he contended, the Spaniards have been warned. They will be vigilant."

But Hal smiled confidently.

"I doubt if they would ever take the signal to be a signal. Nothing but my answer would make them suspicious. By the time a sufficient force of the enemy could leave Matanzas and be here, my men and myself will be embarked and speeding toward Key West."

Juan looked dubious, nevertheless, immediately sending out additional scouts, with orders to cover the roads more than half way to Matanzas.

Nightfall found Hal Maynard eager. Though loth to part with his chum, he was anxious to be back in the United States, wistful for news of what was being done by Uncle Sam to push the war.

The thought of separation made Juan moody; nevertheless he did not fail to exercise the greatest vigilance.

"Now, my dear boy," urged Hal, as they stood side by side, peering through the darkness toward the ocean, "be as careful as possible with the duplicate copy of Gomez's message which you have."

"When you leave me to embark," replied Juan, "I shall hand you the duplicate copy which I have."

"Just what I don't want you to do," rejoined Lieutenant Maynard.

"What, then?"

"If I go out in a small boat, or swim, what guarantee have you that I shall safely reach the vessel waiting for me? I am not safe until I step upon the deck of a war vessel. Therefore, my dear Juan, do not give me your copy of the message, but hold it in your own possession until I am safe with my copy."

"And then?"

"Then immediately and completely destroy the copy which you hold."

"One objection to that, mi amigo."

"What?"

"How shall I know, for certain, when you are on the American man-of-war? It is too dark to see far to-night."

"When you hear two long blasts and four short ones from the vessel's whistle, you will understand."

"Very well," said Juan, soberly. "And now that we have that matter attended to, let us talk of ourselves."

For the next few minutes they chatted as chums do.

Of a sudden Hal, who had not allowed his gaze to wander from the sea, gripped at the Cuban's arm.

"Juan, dear boy, do you see that?"

"Out upon the water I see two blue lights, close together, moving inshore."

"Exactly; and that is the signal."

"And yours?"

"Wait a few minutes."

"You do not signal at once, then?"

"Not until that craft out yonder comes to a stop."

"Oh, I understand, mi amigo. That, also, is in the programme?"

"You've stated the case."

"Sergeant!" summoned Hal.

Brown quickly responded, bringing a bundle that had dangled from his saddle bow all the way.

"All ready, sergeant?"

"All ready, lieutenant, at the word."

As Brown spoke, after saluting, he began to untie the parcel.

"The lights are coming close inshore," reported Juan, now greatly interested in what was occurring on the water.

"They will soon stop," predicted Hal.

"You are a good prophet; the lights have just stopped."

This was quite true. Both blue lights were now quite stationary.

"Sergeant!"

"Yes, sir."

"First signal."

Picking a Roman candle out of the bundle, Sergeant Jim touched a lighted match to the fuse.

There was a sputtering of sparks, immediately after which three balls of green are sailed skyward.

Whizz-zz! A sky-rocket arched upward, falling in the direction of the sea.

Sergeant Jim's third piece was another Roman candle, on which this time discharged three blue balls.

Out on the sea the two blue lights began to move again.

"The craft is coming into the bay, then?" asked Juan.

"It will be lying to again before our men can reach the beach."

As Sergeant Jim threw down the empty tube of the last candle, he turned to leap into saddle. The other troopers were already mounted.

Placing himself at their head, Hal gave the order to advance at a trot.

Just behind the Americans, Captain Juan Ramirez caused his Cuban troopers to fall in.

Some thirty of Juan's men were missing from the ranks. These were absent on scout duty.

Half the distance to the beach had been covered when the moving blue lights stopped.

By this time the Americans were trotting down a gentle slope, from which the lights were in constant view.

"Gallop!" rang Hal's order. An instant later Juan gave the same command to his Cubans.

Ahead was the plain, but on either side, extending almost down to the water, were forests.

Out of the woods to the right came a sudden yell. Next rang a tumult of horses' heels. Over all came the tardy alarm-shots of Juan's scouts.

"The enemy!" thrilled Hal, eyeing

beach and woods and trying to calculate the chances of safe escape to the water's edge.

Only an instant later, from the woods at the left, came a volley of infantry fire.

"Sergeant," ordered Hal, "keep straight ahead until further orders."

With that our hero reined to one side, slowing up until Juan came abreast of him.

"Your course is simple, mi amigo," called Juan. Let your squad keep on to the beach. If the enemy come near enough, I will engage to hold them at bay until your men have embarked."

"And you?"

"I will lead my own men."

"But your copy of Gomez's message?"

"Take it from me now."

"Not so, since I might fall with both."

"That is true," groaned Juan. "I must run when I would rather fight. Wait until I speak with my lieutenant."

Giving his horse its head, Hal closed in behind his men. A moment later Juan was with him.

"I am ready, mi amigo," announced the Cuban, drily. "In this instance let us run as fast as if we had never seen Spaniards."

Separating, they passed around the Yankee squad, meeting once more as they placed themselves at its head.

Close behind Uncle Sam's men rode the Cubans, as yet showing no signs of the tactics they meant to employ.

To the left, the infantry soldiers of the enemy were advancing slowly. There would be plenty of time for the troopers to reach the beach in advance of them.

But on the right hand the Spanish cavalry were coming over the ground at a rapid pace.

From the nature of the theatre of operations, the Spanish cavalry, instead of closing in on the American flank, were obliged to fall in at the rear of the Cubans.

Forward came the enemy, reckless of half killing their horses if, thereby, they could cut off the Americans and Cubans from communication with the mysterious blue lights now stationary in the little bay.

At first there was a distance of a hundred yards between the rearmost file of Cubans and the foremost men of the Spanish.

Quickly, however, this distance was reduced to fifty yards.

Juan's lieutenant, a lithe, swarthy, vigilant, active little fellow who had served with Gomez from the outbreak of the revolution, had withdrawn to the rear of his men, whence he kept a sharp watch over his shoulders at the enemy.

Their cavalry, this lieutenant judged, numbered at least three hundred men, but the Spanish infantry was still so far away that the darkness rendered it impossible to form any idea of their numbers.

From fifty yards the distance decreased to forty.

"Halt!" suddenly commanded the lieutenant.

It was an order that the Cubans obeyed so promptly as to throw their animals back on their haunches.

In a jiffy these riders had faced about.

They threw themselves into two platoons, the ends touching at such an angle as to form a wide "V."

"Fire!" shouted Juan's lieutenant, and into the Spanish ranks went some three score bullets.

The Spanish wavered, for, by all the traditions of Cuban fighting, the next move should be a machete charge.

To meet that, the Spaniards preferred to be found on the defensive.

But the charge did not come. Instead, the Cubans prepared to fire another volley.

Enraged, fearing defeat by some new strategy, the Spanish commander, placing

himself at the head of his men, ordered a furious charge.

Steel clashed, as Spaniards and Cubans came together. The latter remained on the defensive, and, though driven toward the water, yielded ground so slowly that the Spanish commander gnashed his teeth.

Sheltered by the Cuban line, Hal, Juan and the American troopers rode down to the beach.

The water of the bay was before them. There was not a boat in sight between them and the blue signal lights out across the water.

"Doubtless the American officer is launching scows for the horses," Hal muttered.

"And meantime, mi amigo, if we are to get aboard, we are losing precious time. Your men can swim their horses?"

"Most certainly."

"Then why not let them do so. We will swim out too. Once you are safe aboard with the message, I will swim back to the beach and help my lieutenant thrash the enemy. But, as to tactics, we are tied until your men, whom I have orders to protect, are aboard the Yankee ship."

The reasonableness of this was apparent. Hal quickly commanded Sergeant Jim to lead the squad into the water and swim for the lights.

"And you?" questioned Juan.

"As for me, I shall wait until I see all the boys started. If one of them were lost, through swimmer's cramp, I should feel responsible for him."

"Then I, too, will stay here with you."

But Hal opposed this vigorously.

"Remember the message, dear boy. Go as quickly as you can to the commander of the vessel. Deliver it into his hands. Then you will be at liberty to think of me."

"But——"

Close at hand a rousing yell broke in upon their dispute.

Some fifty of the enemy's cavalry had stolen along the beach.

At a distance of barely two hundred yards these riders now urged their horses into a gallop.

"Quick!" panted Hal. "Or General Gomez is betrayed."

Without a second's thought Juan rode through the surf, sprang from saddle, and swam by his animal's head.

"Come on, mi amigo!" called back the Cuban.

"At your heels, dear boy!"

Intent on making good his word, Hal plunged in, dropping from saddle in deep water as his comrade had done.

More than a score of the enemy's horsemen followed our hero's example, and his wake at the same time.

Without shouting or firing these Spaniards came in pursuit.

Some took a diagonal course, intent on heading off as many of the Yankees as they could.

Hal saw, with a thrill of uneasiness, that he was in the greatest danger of capture.

"I can call out to my men—they will be back in a second," he canvassed, quickly. "But Juan, he would come back, too. If it came to the worst, neither of Gomez's messages would reach Uncle Sam."

In that predicament, Hal's decision was quickly taken.

In the line of duty he would submit to capture by an inhuman enemy without a single shout for help!

Second Part.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE ENEMY'S CLUTCHES.

"It's death, but——"

Hal's lips compressed grimly as his

eyes rested upon the twin blue lights ahead that showed where the American war vessel lay.

Much nearer were the figures of the nearest of his swimming troopers and their mounts.

Juan was somewhere among them—perhaps by this time ahead of them.

"He'll carry the message. A shout from me would bring him back at all hazards. Hal, my boy, you know your duty, and it isn't the first time you've risked death for a poorer triumph."

To the rear of his own men appeared a half a dozen figures—those of Spaniards bent on attacking the Americans in the rear.

But they saw Hal, if they had not done so before, and changed their course to intercept him.

"It must be a Yankee porker," jeered one of the enemy in a low voice.

In a twinkling they had crowded about Hal.

"An officer," discovered another Spaniard.

"Take him a prisoner, then, unless he has the courage to resist."

By way of reply, Maynard fired with the muzzle of his revolver barely above water.

It was a hasty shot, but it drilled a hole through the cranium of the victim intended.

"Car-r-r-ramba!" snarled the soldier next to the one who had been killed. "At the scoundrel, comrades, and he will have not five seconds to live!"

"Not a shot!" piped another voice, as a pair of arms folded around the young lieutenant's neck. "Comrades, we can punish this devil better on shore."

Another enemy had assailed our hero from behind.

While Hal struggled to free his hands, those in front of him joined in the attack.

There was nothing to do but to shout for help.

Since the noise of firing had been overborne by the conflict on shore, there was little chance that the American troopers or Ramirez would hear him anyway.

"Juan is likely to get the message safely aboard ship," soliloquized our hero, swiftly. "To get that paper from Gomez to Uncle Sam is worth the cost of one life! Mine it shall be!"

More swiftly than the words can be read this resolve flashed through his active mind.

Hence it was that the Spaniards, expecting a fierce resistance, were astonished at finding themselves victors after a brief, silent struggle.

"To shore with our prize pig!" laughed one of the captors. "The others are too far out in the bay for us to overtake them."

"I am your prisoner," said Hal, moodily. "But you will do well not to undertake to catch my comrades."

"Why so, porker?"

"You would be like the foolish puppy in the thunderstorm."

"What did he do?" muttered one of the troopers, swimming so close as to thrust his evil eyes almost under our hero's.

"The puppy I am speaking of," rejoined Hal, "tried to catch the lightning."

"Well?"

"He caught it."

"And then?"

"The lightning felt first-rate after the meeting. But the puppy had learned a valuable lesson too late to profit by it."

"Did the lightning run away from the puppy?" growled another Spaniard, pointing a derisive finger at the all but vanished figures of the rapidly swimming troopers.

"The lightning may have tried to," commented Hal, "but the puppy I have been telling you about didn't have sense enough to know when he was well off."

"There is some truth in what our porker says," murmured one of the Spanish soldiers. "At best, we would have a hard swim to overtake the fugitives. We should get under the guns of that gunboat yonder, besides. As it is, we have a Yankee officer, who will have a chance to tell some of his fables to our commandante."

By this time, the Cuban horsemen, after fighting with dogged bravery, had left the field.

They supposed that the entire American expedition, accompanied by their captain, had gained the Yankee war vessel; but, even so, the Cubans did not retire until more than a third of their number had fallen. And the Cuban slain had more than twice their number of dead Spaniards for company.

Lieutenant Hal was conducted into the presence of a Spanish colonel of infantry, who, puffed with pride, was talking with the major of cavalry.

"It was a great victory, an easy one," declared the colonel.

"The Yankees are just like the Cubans; they cannot fight," responded the major.

"A prisoner, my colonel," announced the soldier who gripped at Hal's arm. "He is a Yankee officer."

"Ah! The porker has found what Spain's soldiers can do," jeered the colonel, turning upon our hero. "Is it not so, porker?"

"I saw eight hundred Spaniards have a pretty hard time with less than a tenth of their number of the enemy," retorted Hal. "An enemy which does not propose to fight if a fight could be avoided. Had our side been half as numerous as yours, you would now be running at your best speed to Havana. Besides, the American soldiers did not enter into the fight at all. They had bigger business on hand."

"Ah! You say so? What business, then?"

"Find out," retorted Hal, quietly.

"You insolent gringo!" roared the colonel. "Do you understand that you are speaking to an officer of his Spanish majesty, Alphonso XIII.?"

"Yet you, a military soldier, seemed to expect that I would betray the business of my country to you."

"And so you shall!"

"There is where I beg to differ with you, colonel."

"You shall find out how easily we will make you talk."

"Make me?" repeated Hal, his eyes flashing as he drew himself up to his greatest height.

"The torture will do it," sneered the Spaniard.

"Torture?" repeated Hal, scornfully.

"Such threats as that go to prove what I heard some of our army officers say at Key West."

"And what did they say, gringo?"

"That the Spaniards were barbarians, treacherous scoundrels who knew not the meaning of the word 'honor,' that the Spaniards, in a word, were rascals who would not hesitate to torture a prisoner who fell into their hands."

Though Hal knew that every word he uttered was like an additional death warrant, he grimly enjoyed the flush that mounted to the Spanish officer's face.

Yet, even as Lieutenant Maynard spoke, his whole mind was centered on one torturing problem.

So far he had found no chance to destroy General Gomez's message.

"These Spaniards shall never get that!" he thrilled, resolutely.

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE COMMANDANTE'S DOOR.

"Is Captain Baldanero here?"

As the colonel put this question, he glanced around him at the group of Spanish officers.

"I am here, my colonel," answered Baldanero, making his way through the group.

"Good! You shall have charge of our prisoner."

"And your orders, colonel?"

"There are only two orders—the first to see that he does not escape, the second that he is to be delivered as speedily as possible to the commandante at Matanzas."

"And as to taking him there, my colonel?"

"You will use your discretion, captain—and your ingenuity," added the colonel, meaningly.

Baldanero smiled at hearing that last significant clause. He was a fellow who had worked his way up from a sergeantcy, thanks to his peculiar ingenuity in making life miserable for Cuban prisoners of both sexes.

All through the interview two Spanish soldiers had held to our hero's arms, a fact which chafed Hal greatly, for our hero's mind was actively engaged in trying to conjure up some effective way of destroying the message of Gomez before it could fall into the hands of the Span-
ish.

Now Baldanero stepped behind our hero, beckoned up a sergeant and commanded:

"Tie this scoundrel's hands, sergeant, as I have taught you to do in other cases."

"It is quickly done, my captain."

It was. Hal's wrists were lashed by one who demonstrated himself an expert in that line of work. Then, to one of his arms the end of a thirty-foot rope was attached.

"My horse," called Baldanero.

Smiling quietly, the captain mounted.

"The leading string, sergeant," he requested.

A squad of thirty troopers formed behind the captain.

Whish! Whizzing through the air, a lash fell around Maynard's legs.

"Start, my Yankee pig!" jeered Baldanero.

Hal writhed. A groan of pain rose to his lips, but he held it there.

Whish! Another blow cut his flesh.

But Hal stood his ground doggedly.

"I was wrong," grimaced Baldanero.

"I thought I had a Yankee pig. It seems that he is a mule instead. Another cut of the whip, sergeant. It may cure his balking."

Down came the blow, but Hal, tightly compressing his lips, while he steeled his flesh as best he could, did not stir.

"He is worse than a mule," growled Baldanero.

"And you are less noble than a cur," gritted Hal, whose flesh was quivering.

"You do not know how to treat a prisoner of war as civilized warfare demands."

"Ha! You shall soon learn the limit

of insolence which will be permitted in you," gnashed Baldanero, who, with the other officers, including his colonel, looking on, felt that his hard-earned reputation for effective rascality was at stake.

"Sergeant," ordered the captain, "use the point of your sword to prod the obstinate dog."

Hal braced himself to meet this new indignity, but just then there came a new diversion.

Over the water came a rousing cry of:

"Cuba libre!"

It was twice repeated.

Hal Maynard trembled with joy as he recognized the voice of Juan Ramirez.

Our hero strove to answer, but the sergeant, as if divining his purpose, held a hand over his mouth to muffle his voice.

It was well that he did so, for, in another instant, our hero understood the meaning of that cry.

Juan, standing on the deck of the American war vessel, was endeavoring to learn whether any Cubans remained on the beach.

The absence of an answering yell of "Cuba libre" showed that the islanders had retreated.

Boom! sounded a Yankee gun.

It must have been a chance aim, but a six-inch shell landed within fifty feet of where the officers stood.

Crash! It exploded, killing or wounding a dozen soldiers, and the wonder was that none of the officers were hit.

"Car-r-r-r-rajo!" vented the excited colonel. "The miserable Yankees are firing upon us when they know that we have no cannon with which to reply. Is that what they call bravery?"

Boom! Another shell landed, throwing up a cloud of sand, but that was all, for the Yankee gunners were aiming in the dark.

They had been forbidden to show any lights near the coast, except the two blue signal affairs.

"Since the mule balks," cried Baldanero, "raise him to your shoulders. This is not the place to tame him. We will do that later."

Hal swiftly found himself upon the shoulders of four men, who trotted off with him, Baldanero riding close enough to still retain his grip upon the rope.

Two more shells landed, one of them wounding four soldiers in the ranks.

At the end of three minutes the Spanish column had retreated out of any danger.

This was especially true of Baldanero, who had succeeded in keeping at the head of the column.

As Hal's bearers arrived under the shelter of a grove of trees the captain ordered:

"Now, drop Senor Obstinate to his feet."

As Hal once more stood, Baldanero, drawing his revolver, added:

"If you are not obliging enough to obey my every order, I shall be obliged to speed you with bullets."

It was just the kind of threat that was well calculated to render the young American still harder to manage.

Baldanero, however, believed that he would speedily succeed in removing the last trace of his prisoner's defiance.

"If I provoked them into killing me," flashed Hal, mentally, "it would undoubtedly be a much easier fate than the one these rascals will reserve for me at Matanzas."

But with this came another thought:

"And if they kill me, they will undoubtedly search me. In that case, they would soon possess General Gomez's message."

Hal writhed inwardly for an instant.

His pride urged him to defy Baldanero to the last.

On the other hand, had he any right, no matter what the sacrifice otherwise, to risk betraying Gomez's confidence?

"Until I have found some chance to destroy that message, I must take every indignity. After that——"

The unfinished sentence was expressed in the young lieutenant's flashing eyes.

Baldanero cocked his pistol.

"Your weapon is unnecessary," protested Hal, huskily. "I am a prisoner of war, and must submit."

"Ah! Now the Yankee is learning who his master is," jeered the Spaniard. "Then, if I put up my pistol, you give me your word to obey me?"

"As long as you retain the least semblance of being a gentleman as well as an officer."

For just a second or two it looked as the Spaniard would change his mind about not using his pistol.

Slowly, however, he returned it to the holster.

"Trot!" he growled.

The sergeant, waiting, gave our hero a push in the direction of Matanzas.

"Run," he growled, "or you will have cause to fear our terrible captain."

"For the sake of that message," growled our hero, behind his set teeth.

He broke into a run, Baldanero easily keeping up with him.

Behind the captain came some thirty troopers.

With only one or two breathing intervals on the way, Hal and his escort of guards arrived at Matanzas.

"Our people are still out of bed," laughed the captain, noting with satisfaction the throngs on the streets. "Now, Yankee, you shall have a splendid chance to show our citizens how your nation can run. Run as fast as you can, or be certain of prompt and ugly punishment!"

It was a rare spectacle for the people of Matanzas. As the cavalry came clattering through the streets, driving the young American officer ahead of them, the people rent the air with derisive shouts.

"They are brave people, with a helpless enemy," gritted Hal, his face flushing as much from indignation as from the violence of his run.

Missiles flew through the air, some of them striking the prisoner, nor did the guards make any effort to check the mob.

Hal bore this new outrage with all the equanimity he could.

"Until I have destroyed Gomez's message——" kept surging through his mind.

"A brave runner! A superb one!" shouted the populace, the loafers on each succeeding street corner taking a hand in throwing any available missiles.

"They're not throwing rotten vegetables, anyway," grunted Hal, gloatingly. "They're eating them!"

There was nothing hang-dog in the look of the young American as he ran.

On the contrary, he stared obsequiously at the people who showed themselves.

"Good! They know what hunger feels like," he exulted, inwardly. "These Spaniards starved the Cubans to the point of death or desperation. Now, with the American blockade shutting out their food supplies, they know just how the Cubans felt."

"The sleek pig!" snarled an emaciated Spaniard, darting out from the gutter and running alongside of the prisoner.

"I believe I am sleek," retorted Hal. "Out in the country the Cuban soldiers are eating as much as they can hold. So are the Yankees up north. If you people feel the pangs of hunger in your stomachs, it is the punishment of Heaven for the crimes you committed against the Cubans."

"Car-r-r-ramba!" howled the fellow. "This malicious dog taunts us with the hunger that is gnawing us up. Captain," calling long enough for Baldanero to catch up with him, "where are you taking the prisoner?"

"To the commandante, my good fellow."

"Give the commandante a bit of advice from me."

"What is it?"

"Tell the commandante that a loyal Spanish subject advises him to tie this Yankee pig to a pole on some housetop, and there leave him until slow death comes. Then the Yankee will know what it feels like to die of heat, starvation and thirst."

"Excellent counsel, my good fellow," replied Baldanero, lifting his hat. "You would be in the Spanish army."

The residence of the commandante of Matanzas was finally reached.

Yelling, throwing stones and cursing, the crowd pursued until the young American disappeared from view behind the line of sentinels at the commandante's door.

CHAPTER VII.

TACT'S BATTLE WITH CRAFT.

"Senor Commandante has retired," a young officer informed Captain Baldanero.

"Be good enough to take him my compliments, and say to him that I have

news of great importance for him," was the captain's reply.

No sooner had the young officer departed than the captain turned to the nearest soldiers to say:

"Take this rope, and tie our dog to yonder post. Give him sufficient play of line to enable him to run about a little."

It was an excellent joke, the soldiers thought. They yanked so hard at the line that our hero was pulled over backward.

"Make him come on all fours," suggested a sergeant.

But as this plan would have involved liberating the prisoner's hands, Captain Baldanero negatived it by a shake of his head.

"Have all the sport you will, my children, but do not forget that the Yankee is a prisoner in earnest."

For that reason, the best that remained was to drag the young lieutenant on his back.

More than twenty feet Hal was hauled across the sandy courtyard before the end of the rope was made fast to the post.

"What a good time these fellows are having," grimaced the young lieutenant. "Yet I have seen times in the field when these little brown monkeys did not appear to enjoy themselves nearly so well."

Captain Baldanero, at this moment, received word that el commandante had risen and would receive him. He thereupon hastened into the house.

"The Yankees say that we are no marksmen," grumbled one of the soldiers. "Let us see what we can show this porker."

Suiting the action to the word, he picked up a pebble as large as a robin's egg, letting it drive at the boy.

Spat! The missile struck in the eye of a private standing a half a dozen feet from our hero.

"Car-r-r-r-rajo!" yelled the victim, holding his hand to the damaged optic.

Then, pain maddening him, he rushed at the stone-thrower. There was a flash of steel in the air. The man attacked also drew a knife-like lightning.

"At him, Pedro!"

"Cut his throat, Josefo!"

Like magic the prisoner tied to the

post was forgotten, the soldiers finding keener excitement in the knife fight now on.

"Blood!"

"Car-r-r-ramba! That was a good blow!"

"More blood! These are brave fellows!"

"Santa Maria! Pedro has gouged out his eye!"

"Nevertheless, Josefo will win. Bueno! He has cut Pedro's abdomen open. The fight is over!"

Pedro was the stone-thrower; perhaps it would be better to say the man who did not know how to throw a stone.

He lay now on the ground, gasping out his life, while Josefo, with one eye blackened by a stone and the other gouged out by Pedro's lean forefinger, now stood over the fallen one, exulting in the victory.

"Stop! What devil's work is being done here?"

The one who now interfered was the young officer who appeared to be in command of the guard in the court-yard.

Catching sight of the dying Pedro, the officer beckoned to the guard, four of whom came up.

"This is the rascal who stabbed a comrade, is it not?" demanded the officer, turning on Josefo, who now tossed away his bloodstained knife.

Not a man spoke until Josefo sullenly admitted:

"Yes, I struck the blow that will finish Pedro. But it was his own fault. He struck me in this blackened eye with a stone. He gouged out the other eye, as you will see, my lieutenant."

"Is this true?" questioned the officer, turning upon the soldiers who had been spectators.

Several of them nodded confirmation.

"What have you to say?" questioned the lieutenant, bending over the dying man.

Pedro opened his mouth to speak.

He succeeded in making a few inarticulate sounds before his eyes became glassy and the sounds died out in his throat.

"He will never testify for his comrade," said the officer, rising. "Pedro is dead. Sergeant, you will see that the carcass is taken away. Josefo, it will be

necessary to put you under arrest until your innocence can be proved."

His innocence?

Hal Maynard shuddered in disgust.

But the incident quickly terminated for him, for Captain Baldanero appeared in the doorway, calling:

"Sergeant, untie the prisoner from the post and bring him in."

Slash! The sergeant who had but just picked up Josefo's bloody knife, cut the line close to Hal's wrists.

"Come, pig," grunted the non-commissioned officer, gripping one of our hero's arms.

At the doorway the captain relieved the sergeant of his charge.

"El commandante is waiting to see you," leered Baldanero. "Be careful to approach him respectfully, for it is he who will decide your fate. My advice would be to fall upon your knees before him."

"Would you approach an American general in that fashion?" queried Hal.

"I?" demanded Baldanero, opening his eyes very wide. "Decidedly not. I am a Spaniard."

"You have a poor idea of our bravery," smiled Hal.

"Yankee bravery?" jeered the other. "Why, you are a race of shopkeepers. It is absurd for you to take up swords, you who understand the yardstick much better."

"Pray, my friend, that you will have no personal need to change your mind before the war is over."

"When the war is over," answered Baldanero, stoutly, "the United States will be Spanish provinces."

"It's nice to be sure," mimicked Hal.

By turning his head he could look down upon the top of the cap worn by the insignificant little Spaniard. The idea of such a people fighting Uncle Sam's forces struck our hero as being so comical that his voice rang with honest mirth.

Baldanero flushed. He would have made an angry reply had it not been that, after traversing several corridors, they now stood before the door of el commandante.

"Enter!" ordered Baldanero, giving our hero a shove at the doorway.

Quick as a flash young Maynard balked. Bracing himself on his feet, he squarely refused to budge.

Getting behind him, the captain gave another shove. He might as well have tried to push the house over, for his muscles were utterly unequal to the task of moving his heavier prisoner.

"Car-r-r-r-rajo!" growled Baldanero. "We shall soon see how long you will disobey!"

Swish! His sword flew out.

Before he could use it, however, a jibing voice interposed:

"Do not lose your temper; captain, in the presence of the enemy."

"But I cannot make the pig move, Senor Commandante," growled our hero's captor.

"Perhaps you do not go the right way about it, captain. Wait until we see what I can do."

When he first spoke, Senor Commandante was out of Hal's range of view.

He quickly came forward. Hal saw himself being surveyed attentively by a Spaniard in general's uniform, a man some fifty-five years of age, and with an amount of soldierly bearing that counterbalanced Baldanero's lack of the same characteristic.

"The prisoner is an officer?" questioned the commandante.

"A lieutenant in the American Army," answered the captain.

"And a young man of spirit, judging by his appearance," commented the commandante. "I do not wonder that he refused to be driven. While your tactics are excellent, captain, with some people, they will not answer at all times. I see that your prisoner has his wrists lashed together."

"Yes, Senor Commandante."

"Be good enough to release them."

Grumbling a bit, under his mustache, Baldanero complied.

Smiling gravely, the commandante held out his hand.

"Will you shake hands with me, Senor Americano?"

"You can hardly expect me to do so as a token of friendship."

"No, senor, for we are enemies, and bitter ones at that."

"But I will shake hands with you,"

cried Hal, "as one whom I believe to be a brave officer."

As they let go of hands, the commandante added:

"Come over to my desk. Take a seat beside me. Captain, will you have the kindness to remain near the door?"

Frowning a bit, the captain went over to where he heard but few words of the dialogue that followed.

"You are an American officer?" began the commandante, to which Hal nodded assent.

"Your name?"

"Will you pardon me, Senor Commandante, if I withhold it?"

"You are not ashamed of the name?"

Hal flushed, but replied:

"I have done nothing yet to make the name a distinguished one."

"Much to the contrary," replied the commandante, courteously. "You have made your name famous throughout the island, Lieutenant Maynard."

Despite himself, Hal started.

"You see how well informed I am," pursued the Spaniard. "But I will not seek to mystify you. You were recognized five minutes ago by one of my officers, who happened to be in a fight that you took part in. It was he who informed me who you were. I must compliment you, lieutenant, on the way that you have brought defeat to our forces on two or three occasions. Unfortunately, your last exploit, in which you led a regiment of our cavalry to extermination, while disguised as a Spanish officer, is likely to cost you dearly. You will understand, lieutenant, that on that occasion you acted the part of a spy! Of course you cannot be in doubt as to the fate of a spy."

If Hal blanched a trifle, his voice was steady enough as he replied:

"I am not in doubt, Senor Commandante. The death of a spy is an ignominious one, but I shall face it with composure. I cannot forget that fate has permitted me to do one or two glorious acts for my country."

"You are brave, lieutenant. I had expected that you would be. But I have been thinking, lieutenant," announced the commandante, as he lighted a cigarette and blew the first whiffs of smoke

ceilingward. "I have been thinking that it would be too bad to visit death upon so brave a man. Therefore, I have found a way for you to escape it."

Hal did not trust himself to speak, but merely nodded to show that he was listening.

"You have been to the camp of General Gomez," went on the Spaniard. "You would hardly deny that you went there on some direct commission from the United States?"

The commandante paused, but, seeing that our hero made no reply, he went on:

"Lieutenant Maynard, tell me frankly the nature of that business. Discuss the whole of it with me, candidly, and I agree not only that your life shall be spared, but also that you shall be free to go wherever you please. In that case, when you go, you will find that we part as warm friends."

The commandante's manner was urbane and cordial, but Maynard knew the Spanish nature well enough to know that the other's manner was but a mask to sinister thoughts.

"Perhaps two can act," gritted the boy, inwardly.

Hypocritical Hal! Forming his plan in an instant, he smiled.

"Your offer is a generous one, Senor Commandante," he answered. "Do not think me ungrateful if I do not accept it in an instant. Were you in my position, you would be better able to understand that I need to reflect—perhaps to impose a few conditions."

"Think by all means," replied the Spaniard, courteously. "As to conditions, that will be for me to say when I have heard them."

"Do you object to my smoking, Senor Commandante? Perhaps the aid of tobacco will make my head clearer."

"Smoke as much as you please. Treat this poor place as if it were your home, lieutenant," was the grandiloquent answer.

"I will presume upon your kindness for a match."

"Certainly. And my cigarettes are at your disposal."

"Thank you, senor. I have my own tobacco."

Accepting the match, Hal struck it.

As the blaze flamed up, he thrust his disengaged hand into one of his inner pockets.

Innocent Hal! He appeared lost in thought on matters remote from the match and smoking.

Slowly he withdrew his hand from his pocket. The instant it came into sight, however, he swiftly plunged the object against the lucifer's flame.

Pouf! A flash of flame, a puff of smoke, and Gomez's message, in its wrapping of oiled silk, began to burn.

With a cry of consternation, the commandante sprang at him.

Third Part.

CHAPTER VIII.

EL COMMANDANTE'S VENGEANCE.

El commandante found himself much too late.

That wrapping of oiled silk flashed up nearly as quickly as gunpowder would have done.

Like tinder the thin paper inclosed in it was reduced to ashes.

"You accursed gringo!" roared the Spaniard, endeavoring to snatch the blazing mass out of Hal's hands.

But Maynard caught him with his disengaged arm, giving the excited enemy a shove that sent him reeling back against Captain Baldanero, who now arrived hot-footed on the immediate scene.

Both struck the floor, but the captain served as a cushion for his superior officer.

Much disgruntled, the two Spaniards sprang to their feet.

"You lying, treacherous scoundrel!" panted el commandante.

"You brutal pig!" roared Baldanero, ruefully rubbing the portion of his body that had suffered most.

"You are laughing at us!" quivered the commandante, eying the American lieutenant in a way that boded the latter no good.

But Captain Baldanero, smarting from his hurts, drew his sword.

"What are you going to do, captain?" demanded his superior.

"Prod the pig!" came the sullen answer.

"I direct you to do nothing so clumsy. If our prisoner does not make more than ample amends, rest assured that I shall find a way to bring him to reason."

Grumbling a good bit, Baldanero put up his sword.

"Senor Commandante," said Hal, touching lightly with one foot the pile of ashes on the floor which represented the message he had saved from hostile inspection, "I have no doubt whatever that I owe you some apology for the violence I employed with you. I admit that it differed from the gentleness with which you treated me. But I offer you a soldier's excuse. Had that document, which I succeeded in burning, fallen into your hands, I would have betrayed a confidence that was placed in me. You will hardly blame me, from a soldier's standpoint, for what I have done."

"Insolence!" grated the commandante. "It is thus that you repay the kindness I was deluded into showing you. Lieutenant, the time has come to show you less leniency. Captain, a word in your ear."

Hal was quite ignored as the two Spanish officers conferred apart in whispers.

Nevertheless, it would have been folly for the young American to attempt to escape, for the corridors and the outside of the building swarmed with sentries.

For five minutes the two Spanish officers conferred together.

At last el commandante turned to beckon to our hero.

"Senor Americano," announced that officer, "I have resolved to give you one more chance for yourself. Tell us the contents of that paper. I pledge myself to turn you at liberty as soon as I have a reasonable time in which to satisfy myself that you have spoken the truth. Let us say in a fortnight."

"It will take less time than that, senor, to satisfy yourself, senor. I have nothing to say, except that I can tell you nothing. If you do not believe me, it is because your knowledge of human nature is at fault."

"You speak the truth," admitted the commandante, after a pause during which he scanned his enemy's face attentively. "However, you may decide later to be more communicative. Captain, I now turn Lieutenant Maynard over to your

care. You have your instructions."

"Come, pig," was Baldanero's elegantly expressed command, as he gripped the American's arm.

But Hal wrenched himself free to bow to the commandante.

"Allow me to thank you, senor, for knowing better how to treat prisoners of war than does this captain."

"Do not thank me too soon," retorted the commandante, with a smile that was anything but reassuring. "Captain, take your charge away."

Hal now submitted to being led from the room. Out in the corridor stood four soldiers, who immediately surrounded the prisoner.

Baldanero led the way. They left the house, crossed the court-yard, and entered another building. Almost at once Hal's conductor led guard and prisoner down a flight of steps.

After traversing a short corridor below the ground's level, another flight of stairs was descended.

Down here it was as hot as if in an oven. It was so humid that one could almost fancy water dripping from ceiling and walls.

"It is not our pleasantest place," laughed the captain. "But where is that dog of a jailer?"

"Here, my captain," called a voice, as a fellow bearing a lantern shuffled into sight.

"Any one of your four rooms here will answer the purpose, Pedro," requested Baldanero.

"Then let us try Number Two," proposed the jailer, unlocking the grated door of one of the four cells that occupied the short corridor.

"It must be a good room, you understand," jeered the captain.

"It is a most excellent one, my captain," replied the fellow. "It has a fine history."

"Indeed, I have not heard it."

"The last four prisoners, my captain, who were locked up in Number Two became so crazed that, when a knife was tossed in to them, they used the blade to commit suicide."

"An excellent history, indeed!"

"It is said, my captain," leered the jailer, holding up his lantern to take a

grinning view of our hero's face, "that the ghosts of the four suicides haunt the cell."

"By all means, then, put the pig in this pen."

The door being unlocked, Hal Maynard was forced to enter the cell.

It was not over four feet high, making it, therefore, an impossibility to stand upright.

Clang! The door was closed and locked.

"Good-night, my pig," sneered Bal danero, putting his face close to the bars, while the jailer held the lantern up. "Should you be disturbed by spirits, do not hesitate to send for me. You will find me at your disposal to cheer you up!"

As young Maynard sank dispiritedly upon the floor, the tramp of soldiers and mocking laughter were borne back to him.

"Whew!" muttered Hal, sopping his face with his handkerchief. "If the infernal regions are as hot as this hole I hope to die good."

In truth, the heat was insupportable. Before a minute had gone by our hero pulled his blouse off.

Two minutes later his shirt followed. Ere long his trowsers came off. Shoes and underclothing followed.

Still the heat was unendurable. Drenched with perspiration, nude, but still roasted, Maynard crawled to the door, keeping his mouth to the bars to catch any faint breeze that might come down the corridor.

"Can I stand a night of this?" groaned the boy.

Down the corridor came a faint breeze of cooler air. Hal drew it in eagerly.

Tramp! tramp! It was the jailer, coming upon the scene, followed by two soldiers with full arms.

"The worthy captain is worried lest you catch a chill," cackled the keeper of the keys. "Therefore, he has instructed us to look well to your comfort."

Comfort? Hal Maynard felt like screaming when he saw the soldiers making preparations to build a fire on the stone floor just beyond the door of his cell.

All too soon, the fagots were ready.

Crackle! They blazed up, sending their heat into the room at a rate that brought the perspiration pouring from every pore in the sufferer's body.

"I will come back, every now and then, to see that the fire does not run too low," promised the jailer.

He was as good as his word. All through the night the fire was kept replenished.

"Do they mean to kill me in this fiendish way?" wondered the miserable prisoner.

Morning came at last. No ray of daylight crept into that suffocating cell, but Hal, consulting his watch by the aid of the blaze in the corridor, knew that the hour of eight had come when the jailer once more appeared.

"I have your breakfast," announced the fellow. "I regret, *Senor Americano*, to say that it consists only of dry bread, but, thanks to your American fleet, food is scarce. The bread will have to do you."

He held it out, the quarter of a stale, shrivelled loaf.

But in his other hand he held a tin pail half full of water.

"Don't want anything to eat," protested the boy. "I'll thank you, though, for a drink of the water."

"Not until you eat," insinuated the jailer.

"I can't eat, I tell you—at least, not until I have cooled my mouth with water."

"No water until you have eaten all this bread," was the stubborn answer. "Those are the captain's orders. I did not frame them."

"Let me have the bread, then," sighed the boy. "I will try to eat it, for the sake of the water."

It was worse than the feast of Tan-talus, to see the water which the Spaniard held tauntingly just out of reach.

But the sight of the water nerved our hero to the effort.

He took the dry crust, bit into it, began to chew.

It was keen torture to eat dry bread when so tormented by thirst.

Yet our hero kept on with the mastication, though it took fifteen minutes to dispose entirely of the bread.

"Now the water!" he demanded, speaking so thickly that his words were hardly understandable.

The pail was passed in. Hal seized it with eager, trembling fingers, took a long draught, then of a sudden spit out the water.

It was salt!

CHAPTER IX.

BALDANERO'S TACTICS CHANGE.

"Good, is it not?" jeered the rascally jailer.

"Only cowards could treat a helpless prisoner in such fashion," retorted Hal, his voice sounding thicker than ever.

"Oh, this is merely a touch of what is before you! Did you not hear me tell the captain, last night, that the last four prisoners in this cell committed suicide?"

Hal made no answer. He would not please his tormentors by asking for more humane treatment that would be refused.

"Now that you have breakfasted and slaked your thirst," jibed the jailer, "you will put on all your clothing again. Our captain is coming soon to take you for a walk."

"Where?"

"Oh, as to that, I cannot tell you. Doubtless the walk will give you rare pleasure."

Hal doubted that. It did not fit with the idea he had formed of Baldanero.

"There will be at least a chance to stand up straight and stretch myself," mused the wretched captive.

He lost no time in dressing, which was fortunate, for, by the time he had finished drawing on his clothes, Captain Baldanero came down the corridor.

He was followed by a guard of four soldiers.

"Ha! Good-morning, Senor Maynard," smiled the captain, halting and showing his swarthy face against the bars. "You have had a pleasant night, I trust."

"It was just like home," Hal sardonically declared.

"Then you have no complaint to make?"

"How can one complain against perfection?"

"Well, come out," ordered the captain, signing to the jailer to unlock the door.

As our hero stepped into the corridor, the Spanish officer held up a pair of handcuffs.

"You understand, senor? A necessity which, you may be sure, I regret."

Snap! With that sound our hero's wrists were securely ironed before him.

"The guard will accompany us only so far as the street," Baldanero informed him. "After that, you will be accompanied only by me."

Somehow the captain's manner, as well as his voice, had softened.

"No doubt the commandante has been giving the fellow a lesson in politeness," conjectured Maynard. "Well, he certainly needed it!"

"I am instructed to accompany you for an airing, senor," went on the captain. "Have you ever been in Matanzas before?"

"Never."

"Then a walk in one direction would please you as well as if we went in another?"

"Quite as well."

"You have not breakfasted yet?" demanded the captain, with a sidelong leer that brought the hot blood to the American's face.

"It was not much of a breakfast," Hal dryly replied, as soon as he could master his tongue.

They had left the building, and were stepping out into the street by this time.

At once the nearest loungers caught sight of Maynard's uniform and the tell-tale handcuffs.

In a very few moments such a crowd had gathered that the captain was obliged to call out:

"How now, my friends? Have you no good manners?"

But the crowd, though it fell back a little, continued to throng about and stare at the prisoner, making comments that could not be printed.

No mob in the world is so skilled in making indecent comments as is the Spanish mob!

"It is useless to try to go on foot," growled Baldanero. "We shall be compelled to call a carriage."

He held up his hand to the nearest

driver, and a minute later both were seated in an open barouche.

"I take it for granted," pursued Baldanero, giving his victim a cunning look, "that you would enjoy going to a cafe."

"That depends."

"What do you mean?"

"Depends upon whether I am to eat and drink."

"To be sure you are. It is el comandante's orders. And you may be sure that el comandante is anxious about you, or he would not give such orders. Do you know that meat is worth now a dollar and a half a pound, and that we pay five prices for wine? But you are to breakfast as royally as you wish. Ah! There is the cafe over there."

In a moment more they were alighting at the door of the cafe. Captain Baldanero assisted our hero to the ground with much ceremony.

Before a crowd of the populace could gather to jeer at the prisoner, Captain Baldanero piloted him inside.

"He's wonderfully courteous this morning," mused Hal. "Is he going to treat me like a brother? I don't guess! No doubt I am brought here to sit by with empty stomach and parched throat to see the captain eat and drink his fill!"

Great was his surprise, therefore, when the Spaniard, holding the "lista de comida," or bill of fare, under his eyes, explained:

"You are el comandante's guest, senior. Therefore, bear in mind that you will order whatever you please."

"I'll order, and the captain will eat," grunted Hal.

Nevertheless, he called for an omelette and coffee, and a lemonade to be served immediately.

Baldanero also ordered an excellent breakfast.

Hal's surprise grew greater when the "mozo," or waiter, appeared with the lemonade, as cool as ice could make it.

Hal looked at his manacled wrists, then bent over his head to sip at the lemonade in the top of the glass.

"One moment," interposed the captain, waving him back. "Senior, will you promise me, on your word as an officer and a gentleman, that if I remove the irons while we are in here you will

make no use of your hands that I would not approve of?"

"I promise."

Baldanero's key removed the irons in a twinkling.

"Now drink, senior."

It was a "long" lemonade, but our hero downed it in three gulps.

They were the only ones at table in the cafe, since food was now so high in Matanzas as to make eating in public places unpopular.

Within five minutes the breakfast came in, hot and savory.

"Do not waste time on ceremony," begged the captain. "If you have an appetite, gratify it."

Hal felt as if in a dream until the first food passed his lips. There was no dream about that! It was good, substantial, wholesome, for the cost of that omelette represented more than a day's pay for a workingman in Matanzas.

Baldanero, too, ate with a relish, causing Hal to suspect that it was not often that the captain fared as well.

"Will you have anything more?" urged the captain.

"No, thank you."

"Remember that you are el comandante's guest here. He would be displeased if he imagined that any want of yours went unsatisfied."

"I have had plenty to eat, thank you."

"Very well, then. But will you have a cigar?"

"I never smoke."

"Will you be content to rest here at your ease while I smoke?"

"Quite so. I am wholly at your disposal," rejoined Hal, but there was only a trace of irony in his voice, for his present comfort, as contrasted with the nightmarish experiences of the night before, made him feel decidedly good-natured.

Captain Baldanero slowly smoked a cigar, before he summoned the mozo and said:

"If I mistake not, the senior would like another iced lemonade."

"Decidedly, thank you," nodded Hal.

The drink was brought, disposed of, and then Captain Baldanero called for the bill. It amounted to over seven dollars—a famine price indeed.

Grinning broadly, Captain Baldanero

drew out his pencil, writing across the face of the paper:

"Te be presented for payment to el commandante."

"That is the way we pay bills for the commandante's guests," laughed the officer, as the mozo went away.

"And the proprietor will take that bill to the commandante?"

"Perhaps," said Baldanero, shrugging his shoulders. "Yet if the fellow does have the audacity to do that, he will take good pains to see that it is receipted. Now, senor, be kind enough to stand up. I will again place the irons on your wrists, and release you from your parole."

Outside, the carriage still waited. Hal found himself wondering whether the jehu's bill would be settled in the same manner that the cafe charges had been.

"If there is no particular direction in which you wish to travel," hinted Baldanero, "we will take a drive out around the bay to where some new earthworks have been thrown up to prepare a reception for your Yankee war-ships."

"I shall be glad, indeed, of the view," responded Lieutenant Hal. "It would please me even better——"

"Well?"

"If I could see how the Yankee war-ships took their reception."

"Who knows but you will have that pleasure?" exclaimed Baldanero, pointing out across the bay as the carriage reached high ground, from which the view was excellent.

Hal's heart throbbed with longing as he looked out over the water at several different gray-white objects.

These were Uncle Sam's war-ships, engaged in blockading the northern coast of Cuba. Undoubtedly Juan was on one of these.

"If your Yankee tubs would only come near enough!" cried the captain, eagerly.

"If they did, and stayed here a few hours," retorted Hal, "Matanzas would soon be an American city."

"Bah! You Yankees are all boasters. Now, to teach you the folly of boasting, I am going to take you over to our newest earthworks. You can see them from here."

"Then you are willing to take a Yankee officer inside the fortifications?"

"It is because el commandante permits it. Whatever you may learn about our forts will never benefit the United States."

"You're sure of that?" Hal coldly inquired.

"Certain of it, senor. You will soon agree to all el commandante asks. After that you will not care to go back to the Yankees. So we are not afraid for you to see our forts."

"Are you not rather too confident that I shall agree to the commandante's wishes?"

"If you do not," returned Baldanero, quickly, "do you realize what it will mean for you? Let me tell you. To-day, when we return to the city, if you are not pliant, you will go back to the same cell in which you spent the night. For you to-night will be the same as last night. Then to-morrow you will come out to eat something, and have fresh air. But each day you will have less of fresh air and less to eat and drink. In a few days there will be no relief for you. You will come no more out into the open air; your only diet will be moldy bread and salt water. When you are all but dead, you will be removed to some house that is infected with the yellow fever. Your last moments will be dragged out in the foulest, hottest place that can be found in Matanzas. Looking ahead at your fate, and realizing how relentless it will be, I have no doubt that, ere long, you will decide to purchase life and comfort by doing what el commandante requires of you."

"Captain Baldanero," cried Hal, "you will soon learn something."

"Yes?"

"You will learn how stubborn a Yankee can be where his idea of duty is concerned. You will discover that Spain has no genius cunning enough to cause a true American to betray his flag."

"Senor, I warn you to think of the fearful torment that your refusal will expose you to."

"I have thought of it, captain, and it makes me shudder."

"So that you will reconsider?"

Baldanero's voice quivered as he thus urged.

"So that I shall persist in my refusal!"

Hal's voice, though low, rang with earnest manhood.

"Ah, well," retorted the Spaniard, "we shall see who triumphs in the end. Here we are at the fort. We will alight here, senor."

Baldanero's uniform carried him past the sentinels; his use of the commandante's name carried Hal also past the barrier of steel.

Inside the works, hundreds of peons and negroes toiled, throwing up dirt to strengthen the walls.

Two full companies of soldiers had also been impressed to hurry on the task.

We shall soon have walls that no Yankee shells can hurt," voiced the captain, proudly. "Walk over with me toward the water side of the works. Do you see these magnificent guns, senor? What havoc they will work against any Yankee ships that come within their range! A shell from each of these guns may be enough to make the Yankee nation sue for peace on any terms that we care to impose."

Baldanero talked as did many other Spaniards whom our hero had met.

Even those Spaniards who passed for educated men appeared utterly ignorant of the Spanish deficiencies as soldiers. Their ignorance also betrayed them into the belief that trained American fighting men were woefully inferior to the Spanish standard.

"These walls are strong," Hal admitted to himself. "Good guns, too. If the Spaniards only knew how to serve them, they could make things mighty interesting for Uncle Sam's blue-jackets. Jupiter, how I'd like to see the engagement between these forts and our ships!"

Baldanero, meeting some officers whom he knew, accepted an invitation to adjourn to a tent that stood near by. As a matter of course our hero accompanied him. Here cheap wines and poor cigars were consumed.

"It is noon," said Baldanero, at last consulting his watch. "I am under orders to have this gringo back to his cell soon. Gentlemen, I must leave you."

"Perhaps you had better wait, captain," suggested an officer, appearing in the doorway of the sent. "Some of the Yankee vessels are coming much nearer

to our batteries than they have ventured before."

"Diablo! I must stay, then," growled the captain, rising to his feet. "Are you going to fire?"

"If the Yankee's scows come any nearer."

"It will be a brave sight for our prisoner to see. Yes, we will stay by all means. But let us go outside. This will be a sight that no Spaniard should miss. You will be glad to come too, senor?"

"Yes, if the American ships are to fire," retorted Hal, with alacrity. "It will do me good to see your opinion of the Yankee ships and gunners changed." Chorussed laughter answered this.

"There goes the man who will serve our guns," cried Baldanero, when, just as they quitted the tent, an officer rode by at a gallop, dismounted near one of the biggest guns, and left his mule to shift for itself.

"Shall we go down close to the guns, and see how your men handle them?" ventured Hal.

"By all means. It will be a splendid lesson for a Yankee."

Chuckling deeply, Baldanero piloted Hal down to a spot between the two biggest guns in the battery.

Behind one of the pair stood the Spanish artillery officer, taking sight at that instant at the cruiser New York, which, accompanied by its consorts, was now steaming well within range.

"We shall sink that scow!" gritted the officer.

"These Spaniards look upon a good boast as being greater than the deed," muttered Hal, under his breath.

Stepping back with a smile of satisfaction, the artillery officer commanded:

"Fire!"

There was a fearful, booming crash, a splash, on the water out to seaward.

"That shot didn't go within three hundred yards of anything American!" gleefully ejaculated Hal.

"Now, let us see your Yankee porkers shoot!" jeered Captain Baldanero.

Almost immediately he was gratified.

Over the New York's side appeared a puff of white smoke.

CHAPTER X.

SAMPSON'S FLEET BARKS.

Boom!
Sound and shot reached the Spanish
gether.
Uncle Sam's first shell scored a deadly
ll's-eye hit.
Chug! Bang! Cra-ash!
Just beside the first Spanish gun fired
nded the American shell.

It worked fearful havoc. Half a dozen
Spain's soldiers were killed. Twice
at number sank groaning to the ground.
Baldanero himself looked uncertain
ether to stay or fly.

He was badly rattled, that officer of
dons. The laugh was against him.
sides, the captain, brave enough in a
ning battle, was now afraid for his
of these Yankee marksmen.

Crash! Another American shell dis-
tntled a cannon within ten yards of
m.

"Diablo!" chattered Baldanero. "Some
has lied to us. We were told that the
akee gunners could hit nothing they
ed at."

"Stand up!" jeered Hal, coolly, as the
ain dropped on his knees behind the
of earth. "You came out to see how
Yankee gunners could shoot. Surely,
are not going to show the white
ther?"

"They are fiends, those devils on the
s!" quivered Baldanero. "Senor, you
be hit if you expose yourself so reck-
y."

"Oh, don't mind me," laughed Hal,
kingly. "I've been under fire before,
I'm used to it. Stand up, captain,
you'll soon get over your fear, if
ve the making of a soldier in you."
vid with a rage that overcame his
ns of fear, Baldanero leaped to his

"You lying porker, do you dare say
I am afraid of your miserable marks-
" raged the Spaniard.

"Perish the thought!" came dryly
the American lieutenant. "There
ew braver men alive than yourself,
n."

"I am responsible for your return to el
andante. Come, senor, we will get
to Matanzas at once."

They went ten steps to the rear when:
"Oh, may the saints confound those
fiends!" roared Baldanero.

For another American shell had ex-
ploded in such fashion as to kill nearly
the entire crew of one Spanish gun, while
right on the heels of this came a second
projectile that hurled the huge gun over
on its side.

So terrific was the impact that, before
landing, the gun was hurled through the
air, landing close to Baldanero.

He, believing that the hugest projec-
tile of all had struck the fort, fell down
on his face in terror.

As for Hal, he saw his chance. In all
that turmoil, no one was looking at him
during that instant.

Leaping backward, the young lieuten-
ant brought his ironed hands down over
the muzzle of the gun.

Snap! The force of that blow broke
the chain connecting the rings of the
handcuffs.

Still holding his wrists together, May-
nard ran to where Captain Baldanero, re-
covering from his fright, had regained
his shaky legs.

"You were in a hurry, I believe, cap-
tain?" asked the American lieutenant.

"Yes, I must return you at once to the
commandante."

"Let us make haste, then."

American shells were falling fast and
thick around that doomed shore battery.

Gun after gun was hurled from its
carriage; scores of Spain's little brown
soldiers were killed or wounded.

Strangest fact of all, not a loss of life
occurred aboard the American vessels
during that brief bombardment. Not a
Spanish shot did any harm to Uncle
Sam's fighting craft!

Out through the rear of the fort ran
the captain and his prisoner.

Prisoner? That was what Baldanero
thought until, on turning he found him-
self looking into the muzzle of his own
revolver, snatched from his holster by
Hal Maynard.

"Tables turned, captain!" shouted the
lieutenant, grimly. "Any trick will cost
your life. Run toward those horses
picketted to the left!"

Cursing, but not daring to disobey,
Baldanero obeyed. Both ran to where the

horses of a half a dozen Spanish officers stood tetered.

"Into the saddle, captain, on your life. Ride ahead of me, at your best gallop. Bear in mind that I have been known to hit a ten centavo piece tossed into the air!"

Mounting one of the beasts, Baldanero made that animal exert itself to its best powers. After him raced Hal, both going to the eastward, away from Matanzas.

They had not two minutes the start of the rest of the survivors of the garrison, for the Spaniards, who had never dreamed of the tornado of shot and shell the Yankees could fire, were now breaking wildly for safety away from that doomed battery!

There was one more sacrifice on that "sad but glorious day" for Spain—the mule ridden before the engagement by the artillery officer.

Looking out wonderingly over the water, after all the Spanish had fled, the mule met its death from a rapid-fire projectile from a Yankee gun.

In cabling an account of the Matanzas bombardment to Madrid, Captain-General Blanco forgot to mention the death of scores of two-legged warriors of Spain, but dwelt at length upon the death of the mule.

He did well to so honor that noble beast—for the mule was the only Spaniard who did not try to run away!

None of the retreating forces from the battery attempted to race after Hal and his prisoner.

This pair, in which the conditions of captor and captive were now reversed, rode scurrying for two or three miles to

the eastward, until halted by two shots of:

"Mi amigo!"

"Lieutenant!"

Sergeant Jim rode at the head of Ha troopers. With them rode Captain Jaime Ramirez, of the Cuban army. They had been out, scouting about for a chance to rescue their friend and leader.

"I entrusted my copy of General Gomez's message to the American Admiral," announced Juan, in the first breath of meeting.

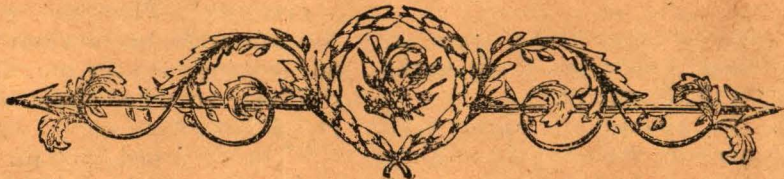
"And I destroyed mine in time," Hal sent back. "Incidentally, here is my captor, Captain Balandero, who is going to the United States to investigate how prisoners of war are treated by Uncle Sam."

It was not much later in the day that Lieutenant Hal Maynard and his comrades trod the deck of one of the American vessels of war.

Safe beneath Old Glory!

[THE END.]

Next week the scene shifts back to the United States. Hal Maynard will find the centre of scenes of daring in the great camp town of Tampa, Florida. A superb description of the military events which have hitherto been unpublished, but which will be given to our readers in complete form in No. 7 of *Starry Flag Weekly* under the title "Tampa's Dynamite Fiend; or, Lieutenant Maynard's Secret Service Explained By Douglass Wells. Out next week!



BOOKS FOR EVERYBODY

TEN CENTS EACH.

Ainslee's Magazine...

For June 1898

SUMMARY

Of Contents

WHERE BATTLESHIPS ARE BUILT

BY

Edward Al.

BE BLESSED (Short Story.)

BY

The Author of "Quo Vadis."

TOM QUARITCH'S SISTER

BY

Stanley J. Weyman.

THE OMAHA EXPOSITION.

BY

Edmund Stone.

THE DUCHY OF DEODONATO

BY

Anthony Hope.

FLOATING HOMES OF NAVAL OFFICERS

BY

Henry Harrison Lewis.

STRATEGY IN MODERN WARFARE

BY

A Graduate of West Point.

THE RUSH TO CARIBOO

BY

Frederic R. Marvin.

A PAINTER OF TRAVEL

BY

Theodore Dreiser.

CUBA 1898

(A Splendid Patriotic Ode)

BY

Harold R. Vynne,

Etc., Etc., Etc.

following list of books will be found useful, entertaining, and of instructive information for all. They are handsomely bound in attractive covers, printed on good quality paper, illustrated and are marvels of excellence. These books have never before been offered at such a low figure. The price, 10 cents each, includes postage.

USEFUL AND INSTRUCTIVE INFORMATION.

Writer's Assistant.	Boys' Own Book of Boats
Hand for Everybody.	The Book of Knowledge
How to Do Business.	Everyday Cook Book.
Our's Manual of Photography.	The Taxidermist Manual.
Universal Letter-Writer.	Good Housekeeping.
Hunter and Angler.	The International Cricket Guide.
Complete Angler.	Amateur and Professional Oarsman's Manual.
Football.	Complete Training Guide for Amateur
Shell's Lawn Tennis.	Dunn's Fencing Instructor.
Complete Checker Player.	Capt. Webb's Swimming Instructor.
Whist and Bagatelle.	
Pool Sports.	Aquatic Guide; or, Yachting and Sailing.
Young Gymnast.	

FORTUNE-TELLING.

Don's Book of Fate.	Cupid's Dream Book
Zola's Dream Book.	

TRICKS.

Don's Black Art.	Heller's Hand Book of Magic
How to Do Magic.	Herrman's Tricks with Cards.

RECITATIONS AND READINGS.

Powerless Reciter.	Select Recitations and Readings.
Young Elocutionist.	The Standard Reciter.

These books will be sent prepaid upon receipt of 10 cents each. When ordering, please be particular to send the full title of the book desired, also your full name and address. The books are 10 cents each, postage free. Address

MANUAL LIBRARY,

25 Rose St., New York.

White and Blue Quarterly.

Earlier issues of Red, White and Blue are now on sale in the form of Quarterlies, each including 13 consecutive issues of this weekly, together with the 13 original illuminated illustrations and an elegant cover in colors. The price is 50 Cents per copy, for which sum they will be sent by mail post-paid to any address in the United States.

- - NOW READY. - -

No. 1, including Nos. 1 to 13 of Red, White and Blue.
No. 2, " Nos. 14 to 26 of Red, White and Blue.
No. 3, " Nos. 27 to 39 of Red, White and Blue.

If your Newsdealer has not got the Quarterlies, remit direct to the publishers,

STREET & SMITH, 81 Fulton St., N. Y.

The cover design, entitled "Gomez Leads The Charge," was painted for the magazine, by Matt Morgan, Jr.

AINSLIE'S MAGAZINE has three artists and war correspondents now following the trend of hostilities; and for a pictorial history of our war with Spain, no magazine can offer more accurate and stirring pictures and letters at so small a price.

96 Pages 50c. a Year

Howard, Ainslee & Co., 81 Fulton Street, N. Y.

Diamond Dick, Jr., Quarterly.

The earlier issues of Diamond Dick, Jr. are now on sale in the form of Quarterlies, each including 13 consecutive issues of this favorite weekly, together with the 13 original illuminated illustrations, and an elegant cover in colors. The price is **50 Cents** per volume, for which sum they will be sent by mail post-paid to any address in the United States.

- - NOW READY. - -

- | | |
|--|--|
| No. 1, including Nos. 1 to 13 of Diamond Dick, Jr. | |
| No. 2, " Nos. 14 to 26 of Diamond Dick, Jr. | |
| No. 3, " Nos. 27 to 39 of Diamond Dick, Jr. | |

If your Newsdealer has not got the Quarterlies, remit direct to the publishers,

STREET & SMITH 81 Fulton St., N. Y.

STARRY FLAG BINDERS.



35
Cents.

This binder will hold twenty-six copies, and will keep your papers always clean and smooth. No more missing numbers. Handy to refer to and ornamental as well as useful. Sent post-paid to any address on receipt of price.

STREET & SMITH, New York City.

OUT-DOOR SPORTS.

Complete instructions for playing many of the most popular out-of-door games is found in this book. The games are illustrated and very easily mastered. Price ten cents. Address
STREET & SMITH, 25 Rose street, New York,
Manual Library Department).

HOW TO DO BUSINESS.

This book is a guide to success in life, embracing Principles of Business, Choice of Pursuit, Buying and Selling, General Management, Mechanical Trades, Manufacturing, Bookkeeping, Causes of Success and Failure, Business Maxims and Formulas, etc. It also contains an appendix of complete business forms and a dictionary of commercial terms. No young man should be without this valuable book. It gives complete information about trade professions and occupations in which any young man is interested. Price ten cents. Address

STREET & SMITH, 25 Rose street, New York
(Manual Library Department.)

Tip Top Quarterly

The earlier issues of Tip Top Weekly are now on sale in the form of Quarterlies, each including 13 consecutive issues of this favorite weekly, together with the 13 original illuminated illustrations, and an elegant cover in colors. The price is **50 Cents** per volume, for which sum they will be sent by mail post-paid to any address in the United States.

- - NOW READY. - -

- | | |
|---|--|
| No. 2, " Nos. 14 to 26 of Tip Top Weekly. | |
| No. 3, " Nos. 27 to 39 of Tip Top Weekly. | |
| No. 4, " Nos. 40 to 52 of Tip Top Weekly. | |
| No. 5, " Nos. 53 to 65 of Tip Top Weekly. | |
| No. 6, " Nos. 66 to 78 of Tip Top Weekly. | |

If your Newsdealer has not got the Quarterlies, remit direct to the publishers,

STREET & SMITH, 81 Fulton St., N. Y.

AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHY

Many people imagine that a photographer's camera is a difficult machine to handle, and that the work is dirty and disagreeable. This is a mistake. Photography is a clean, light, and pleasant accomplishment, within the reach of all. The camera will provide friend, reporter, and helper. With a very inexpensive camera, a boy or girl can now learn not only to take good pictures, but pictorial art. There is everywhere a demand for art remunerative prices. A complete guide to this fascinating art, entitled AMATEUR MANUAL OF PHOTOGRAPHY will be sent on receipt of ten cents.

STREET & SMITH, 25 Rose street, New York
(Manual Library Department).

Nick Carter Quarterly

The earlier issues of Nick Carter Weekly, are now on sale in the form of Quarterlies, each including 13 consecutive issues of this favorite weekly, together with the 13 original illuminated illustrations, and an elegant cover in colors. The price is **50 Cents** per volume, for which sum they will be sent by mail post-paid to any address in the United States.

- - NOW READY. - -

- | | |
|--|--|
| No. 1, including Nos. 1 to 13 of Nick Carter Weekly. | |
| No. 2, " Nos. 14 to 26 of Nick Carter Weekly. | |
| No. 3, " Nos. 27 to 39 of Nick Carter Weekly. | |

If your Newsdealer has not got the Quarterlies, remit direct to the publishers,

STREET & SMITH, 81 Fulton St., N. Y.

WRESTLING.

History tells us that wrestling was the first form of athletic pastime. Without doubt, it gives strength and firmness, combined with quickness and pliability, to the limbs, vigor to the body, coolness and discrimination to the head and elasticity to the temper, the whole forming an energetic combination of the greatest power to be found in man. The book is entitled PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING. It is fully illustrated, and will be sent postpaid on receipt of ten cents. Address

STREET & SMITH, 25 Rose street, New York
(Manual Library Department).

"Naval Stories by a Naval Officer."

TRUE BLUE

The Best Naval Library

❖ ❖ Published ❖ ❖

This weekly is devoted to the stirring adventures of Our Boys in Blue. The famous naval author, Ensign Clarke Fitch, U. S. N., has been engaged exclusively to write for this Library.

Rousing, dashing stories of peril and adventure in blockade and chase with the Spanish fleet told by an eye witness.

No.

- 1—Clif Faraday on the New York; or, A Naval Cadet Under Fire.
- 2—Remember the Maine; or, Clif Faraday's Rallying Cry.
- 3—"Well Done, Porter!" or, Clif Faraday's Torpedo Boat Command.
- 4—Clif Faraday Under Havana's Guns; or, The Stroke for a Capture.

For sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent on receipt of price, 5 cents each, by the publishers, Street & Smith, 81 Fulton Street, New York.

Nick Carter Weekly

The Latest and Best Series of Stories
of Detective Work.

This series of stories will tell how Nick Carter, the most famous detective in the world, trains and educates intelligent and worthy young men in the requirements of the profession. Every youth that wishes to become a detective or takes any interest in the methods of the profession, will be eager to read these stories. 32 pages, illuminated cover—5 cents.

The latest titles are:

No.

- 75—The Human Fly; or, Roxy's Message to the Wide Awake School Boys.
- 74—The Great Detective Trio; or, Nick Carter's Boys in a New School.
- 73—Roxy's Golden Decoy; or, The Girl Detective Plays a Lone Hand.
- 72—Bob Ferret's Password; or, The Chase of the Gold Ship.
- 71—Green Goods; or, A Catch in Bob Ferret's Rat Trap.
- 70—Shadowing a Shadow, or, A Ghost in Nick Carter's Detective School.
- 69—The Man from Texas; or, Bob Ferret and Jack Burton in Double Harness.

For sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent on receipt of price, 5 cents each, by the publishers, Street & Smith, 81 Fulton Street, New York.

Tip Top Weekly

An Ideal Publication for the
American Youth.

Tales of School, Fun, College, Travel and Adventure. The heroes are Americans. The stories are written by the best American authors of boys' stories. The illustrations are designed by a noted artist and printed in colors with new and expensive machinery procured expressly for our famous line of publications. 32 pages, illuminated cover—5 cents.

Titles of the latest stories:

No.

- 112—Frank Merriwell's Peril; or, The Smugglers of the Border.
- 111—Frank Merriwell's Guide; or, Sport Around Moosehead Lake.
- 110—Frank Merriwell's Catch; or, The Canoe Boys of Lake Sebasticook.
- 109—Frank Merriwell's Pursuit; or, The Chase of the Stolen Yacht.
- 108—Frank Merriwell Aroused; or, The Bicycle Boys of Belfast.
- 107—Frank Merriwell's Disappearance; or, The Secret of the Island.

For sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent on receipt of price, 5 cents each, by the publishers, Street & Smith, 81 Fulton Street, New York.

Diamond Dick, Jr.

The Boys' Best Weekly.

Stories of the most fascinating western romance, in which this hero is the leading character, can only be found in this weekly library. The Diamond Dick stories have snap and go to them that has made them very popular with the youth of our land. 32 pages, illuminated cover—5 cents.

The latest titles are:

No.

- 86—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s Dangerous Bet; or, Or Way to Save a Friend.
- 85—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s Tricky Telegrams; or, The New Schoolmarm at Sugar Notch.
- 84—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s Substitute; or, A Blockade That Was Raised.
- 83—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s Warning; or, A Catch in the Last Lap.
- 82—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s Great Old Pard; or, Handsome Harry's Highest Honor.
- 81—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s Walk Over; or, A Dangerous Game at Dough Spoon.
- 80—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s Texas Trump; or, The Hornets of Hopscotch.
- 79—Diamond Dick, Jr. and the Hoboes; or, Handsome Harry in a New Role.

For sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent on receipt of price, 5 cents each, by the publishers, Street & Smith, 81 Fulton Street, New York.